GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
CULTURE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3774
ANSWERED ON:13.12.2001
EXCHANGING OF CULTURAL PROGRAMMES WITH NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES
JAGMEET SINGH BRAR

Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether exchanging of cultural programmes have taken place between India and Pakistan during the last three years;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken to arrange frequent cultural exchanges with neighbouring countries especially with Pakistan in order to encourage friendly contacts?

Answer

MINISTER OF TOURISM & CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN)

(a) & (b): Yes Sir. No valid Cultural Exchange Programme exists with Pakistan.The Indian Council for Cultural relations has been carrying out Cultural Exchanges between India and Pakistan. During 1998-99, a 16-Member Tehrik-e-Niswan Theatre group gave performances at Kolkota, Delhi and Lucknow. A 14-Member Rafi Peer Theatre gave performances at Kolkata and Delhi (December 1998-January, 1999). During the current year the Council assisted the visit to India for 18 days of a 30-Member students/teachers group from the Habib Public School Karachi.

Incoming Distinguished Visitors

2-Member delegation from the University Grants Commission, Islamabad was hosted in May 1998. In January 2000 Pakistani writer Ms. Bapsi Sidhwa was hosted by the Council.The Council has offered to host the visit of six individuals comprising poets, academicians and writers for a period of two weeks under this Programme.

Outgoing Cultural Delegations

Rajasthani Puppet Group and Hindustani Vocal Group visited Pakistan in November, 2000 and March 2001 respectively.During the current year a 3-Member instrumental group led by Ustad Asad Ali Khan (Rudra Veena) gave performance on the occasion of India`s Independence Day. Two more groups are scheduled to be assisted by the Council for presentations in Pakistan.

(c): Importance is given to promote Cultural Exchange Programmes with neighbouring countries in accordance with Cultural Exchange Programmes with Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, China as well as others like Nepal and Bhutan where no CEP`s exist.The activities include exchanges of performing arts delegation, visits by scholars and academicians. Specially commissioned exhibitions on India are also regularly sent to these neighbouring countries. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations holds Maulana Azad Essay Competition annully in memory of the ICCR`s founder which is especially directed towards the nationals of our neighbouring countries.The council lays special emphasis on offering scholarships for study in India to nationals of neighbouring countries under the Cultural Exchange Programme as well as other special scholarship schemes for these countries. With special reference to Pakistan, it has been agreed to offer 20 scholarships to students from Pakistan in Indian technical institutions and the same is now under process.